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Oklahoma to Receive More Highway Dollars: Istook Applauds New Funding Formula

Washington, D.C. -- Oklahoma will receive \$20 million more than expected in federal transportation dollars in FY 2000 as a result of an unexpected surge of gas tax revenue and a new funding formula for distributing the Highway Trust fund.

Historically, Oklahoma has been a donor state, paying more into the Highway Trust fund in fuel taxes than it received in federal apportionments. Last year, however, Congress passed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) which mandates that all gas receipts be used for transportation improvements, rather than being siphoned off for other projects. As a result, Oklahomans will receive a greater percentage of the gas taxes which they pay to the federal government. Under the old funding formula, Oklahoma received an average of \$259 million a year. Under the new formula, Oklahoma was originally estimated to receive approximately \$415 million in FY 2000, but due to the surge in fuel sales that number has risen to \$435 million.

“Oklahoma has been a donor state for too long,” commented Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK). **“We don’t need to raise taxes. We simply need to spend less money in Washington and send more of it back to the states where it belongs.”**

President Clinton has proposed taking the surplus gas receipts and directing them toward a select few transportation programs rather having all the states share the surplus equally, as the current law demands.

“This is our money,” said Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK). **“We paid it in gas taxes, and we need it for our roads. Oklahomans shouldn’t have to pay for the President’s special projects in other states.”**